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ABSTRACT

A review of teacher-education-related events and trends in New York State and a review of research regarding the role of field experiences in the training of prospective teachers previews the presentation of a questionnaire designed to elicit attitudes of teacher educators toward the role of field experiences in teacher preparation programs. The questionnaire seeks to answer questions about field experiences in terms of goals, characteristics of the candidates, characteristics of the staff, content, methods, time factors, ethos, regulations, resources, evaluation, and program impact. (CB)

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Do Field Experiences Make a Difference in the Training of Pre-Service Education Students? Let's Find Out!

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A generally accepted assumption concerning the training of pre-service teachers has been the value of field experiences in the professional studies component of teacher education programs. A majority of these programs were shaped by the "competency based" movement of the 1970's. A basic premise of CBTE was that a field based setting was the proper place to develop and test the competency level of the various knowledge, skills, and attitudes that were listed in education course modules.

In New York State CBTE was mandated by the State Education Department in 1974. The guidelines that teacher education programs followed called for a strong field based component. At St. John's University, teacher preparation programs went from virtually no field experiences prior to student teaching to a predominantly field based program. (Quinn and McGeoch, 1975; Quinn, 1976)

The professional studies component of the elementary (N-6) programs is 36 credits. A 3 credit introductory course and two 6 credit methods courses are field based; student teaching is a 12 credit full semester program. Out of the 36 credits, 27 credits are field based.

The professional studies component of the junior high (N-9) program is 39 credits. A 3 credit introductory course and two 6 credits courses are field based; student teaching is a 12 credit full semester program. Out of the 39 credits, 27 credits are field based.

The professional studies component of the dual elementary (N-6) special education (N-12) program is 51 credits. Two 3 credit introductory courses and three 6 credit methods courses are field based; student teaching is a 15 credit full semester program. Out of 51 credits, 39 credits are field based.

The professional studies component of the secondary program is 21 credits. One 3 credit course is field based; student teaching is a 6 credit half day semester program. Out of 21 credits, 9 credits are field based.

In percentage terms, the elementary (N-6) programs conducts 75% of the professional courses in the field; the junior high (N-9) program conducts 69%

of the professional courses in the field; the dual elementary (N-6) special education (N-12) program conducts 77% of the professional courses in the field; and the secondary program conducts 43% of the professional courses in the field.

The trend in program development at St. John's University mirrors the findings of Heald (1983) on field experience requirements for students enrolled in teacher education programs nationally. Heald noted an increase over 50% in field experience requirements in the last 15 years, from 280 hours to over 420 hours. He also noted a trend towards higher field experience requirements for elementary preparation students as compared to secondary preparation students.

Why is "field based" considered better? Why are so many colleges and universities concentrating program development in this direction? CBTE is dead and buried, at least in New York State.

It's safe to say that "we" in New York did it because "they" made us do it. By "they" I mean the State Education Department. However, after developing guidelines that required education programs to develop a CBTE format "they" removed the mandate and allowed colleges and universities to develop their own approaches, within broad guidelines, for teacher preparation.

It is also safe to say that as much as institutions of higher education in New York kicked and screamed about the changes that had to be made, few have abandoned the field based approach that resulted from CBTE.

In the process of implementing CBTE, education professors who hadn't seen the inside of an elementary or high school classroom in twenty years were suddenly forced into the real world of private and public schools. It was a tremendous culture shock. For some, it served as an inspiration for early retirement; for the majority, it resulted in a renewal of the skills required to prepare future teachers.

In discussions with the constituents (university faculty, students, school teachers, administrators, and pupils) of teacher education programs over the

last ten years, it is invariably the field experience component of programs that is held in the highest esteem. However, field experience, like just about everything else held in esteem by pre-service teacher educators, is under scrutiny and attack these days. The scrutiny is a needed reaction to any practice. The attacks, in many cases, are unjust and unwarranted.

Dr. David Berliner (1985) the key note speaker at the 1987 ATE convention in Houston, expressed grave concern about three reform trends in teacher education: increasing credit requirements in subject matter fields; decreasing the hours devoted to methods courses; and the increasing reliance on field experiences and student teaching.

Berliner cites John Dewey (1904) as the first to address this issue when he cautioned that the immediate learning of useful skills can stifle growth through imitation and subservience to the supervising teacher, and that observation should be primarily to reflect on something rather than to learn how to do something.

Berliner summarizes or reaches the following conclusions: from the research of Bachmann and Schwille (1983) that the blending of education and experience has become an unexamined approach to training teachers; from the research of Feiman-Nemser and Buchmann (1983) that the dangers of learning through direct experience are just starting to be realized; from the research of Griffin et al (1983) that student teaching as it is now conducted is of little value; from the research of Everton, Hawley, and Zlotnik (1980) he quotes that there is "little reason to believe that supervised practical experience, in itself and as it is encountered in most situations is a very effective way to educate teachers." (p. 33)

Berliner concludes his "brief but irreverent look" at field experiences by stating that they "retard the development of analytic skills and thus, in present form, militate against the development of the profession." (p. 3)

Two other studies need to be mentioned. After researching the effects

of early field experiences, Goodman (1985) states that the findings of his study would "on the surface appear to support the call to eliminate early field experiences." (p. 46)

In a study conducted with student teachers and first year teachers, Clark (1985) reports that only 17% of the behaviors mentioned in the study were perceived to have originated as a result of working with supervising teachers in their program.

Finally, the Holmes Group Report (1986) has a comment about the quality of undergraduate field experiences. "Student teachers succeed because they reliquish the norms of professional colleges of education without a struggle. The typical student teaching experience is not a genuine laboratory experience because the possibilities of failure and risk are minimal. The emphasis is on imitation and subservience to the supervising teacher, not upon investigation, reflection, and solving novel problems." (p. 55)

But we know we are doing something right! Unfortunately, a lot of the time we don't know what it is that we are doing right (or wrong). There is no body of research that looks at the effects of field experience programs on graduates of pre-service programs.

Developing and supporting research in this area should be one of the top priorities of the National Field Directors Forum. It has to be a priority, if for no other reason than to justify our existence as a group and as individual professionals working on our respective campuses.

Katz and Raths (1985) developed an excellent framework for conducting research on teacher education programs. They identified eleven parameters or categories of variables that are intrinsic to all teacher education programs. These parameters and their various interactions can serve as a starting point for defining and developing areas of research. The eleven parameters are: Goals, Candidates, Staff, Content, Methods, Time, Ethos, Regulations, Resources, Evaluations, and Impact. (ATT. #1)

Field experiences falls under the parameter of Methods and can be researched in relation to the Matrix developed by Katz and Raths (ATT. #2). The Matrix could provide a starting point for developing ideas on topics to be researched by NFDF as a group or by individual members.

After looking at the Matrix and thinking about the program at St. John's University, I was motivated to devise a Rough Draft Questionnaire (ATT. #3). I was interested in how and when changes evolved in various field programs, if there was a distinct difference in field experiences for secondary education students, and if there were others around the country who had an interest in conducting research in this area.

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I. GOALS

Variables such as the extent to which goals are explicit, realistic, shared, specific, coherent, compatible, thematic, technical, and humanistic.

II. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CANDIDATES

Variations among candidates such as age, sex, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, academic aptitude, intellectual ability, creativity, motivation, commitment, and understandings of teaching and learning.

III. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE STAFF

Staff members are those whose assignments include activities deliberately intended to prepare condidates for the occupation of teaching. Among them are professors, instructors, graduate teaching assistants, adjunct professors, cooperating teachers, advisers and counselors. These individuals may vary in age, experience, knowledge, skills, dispositions, qualifications, ideology, ethnicity, morale, and reputation.

IV. CONTENT

Variation in the information, facts, knowledge, skills, techniques, competencies, ideas, philosophical tenets, texts, curriculum materials, and topics the program presents to candidates. Variables in this parameter include the emphasis given to specific topics, including zero emphasis for those not taught.

V. METHODS

Variables for describing the types of activities by which the content of the program is presented to candidates: observation in schools, field work, practice or student teaching, microteaching, modeling, simulation, direct instruction, and discussion groups and seminars.

VI. TIME/TIMING

Variables of duration covering two, three, and five years; variables of timing and sequencing such as temporal order and simultaneity of constituent events and activities of the program, as well as time of candidates' entry into the program.

VII. ETHOS

Variables include characteristics of the affective quality or tone of the relationships among program participants, as well as the content of these relationships among candidates and staff members, and aspects of the ambience of the program such as whether it is an urban commuter campus, "Ivy League," parachial, land-grant, or rural campus.

VIII. REGULATIONS

Variables include characteristics of graduation requirements; certification and license requirements; laws, regulations, legal restrictions and stipulations related to teacher education and certification, accreditation and any stipulations of labor unions, school districts, local educational authorities, governing boards, etc.

IX. RESOURCES

Variations in the availability of laboratory or demonstration schools, microteaching laboratory, teachers' center, and curriculum library. Variables related to budgets, costs and expenditures, and other financial or funding variables and size of the program and its institution are included in this parameter.

X. EVALUATION

Variables describing the frequency, objectivity, and degree of formality in the ways candidates' progress in academic work and student teaching are assessed; departmental and college evaluations of various aspects of the program, or follow-up studies of graduates.

XI. IMPACTS OF THE PROGRAM

Various effects of the program, from immediate to long-term, proximate to ultimate; they may include candidates' learning, competence, sentiments, and evaluations of their experiences; proportion of graduates employed, superintendents'/principals' evaluations of the teaching effectiveness, of graduates; the graduates' and pupils' achievenment.

A Matrix of Eleven Parameters of Teacher Education Programs

PARAMETERS		I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X	XI
I	GOALS											
II	CANDIDATES											
III	STAFF											
IV	CONTENT											
V	METHODS											
VI	TIME											
VII	ETHOS											
VIII	REGULATIONS											
IX	RESOURCES											
X	EVALUATION											
XI	IMPACT											

developed by Lilian G. Katz
James D. Raths

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at Urbana

ATTACHMENT # 3

Peter J. Quinn
St. John's University

Field Experiences Questionnaire

1. Do you feel graduates of your secondary program are as well prepared for provisional certification as graduates of your other teacher certification programs?

   As well prepared ☐

   Less prepared ☐

   More prepared ☐

   Comments _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

2a. How many course credits have field experiences? How many of these credits are student teaching?

Elementary	_____	_____
N-9	_____	_____
Secondary	_____	_____
Special Ed	_____	_____
Other program _____	_____	_____

b. How many course credits in your professional education program?

Elementary	_____
N-9	_____
Secondary	_____
Special Ed	_____
Other program _____	_____

c. In which year do students have their initial field experience course?

Elementary	_____
N-9	_____
Secondary	_____
Special Ed	_____
Other program _____	_____

d. What percent of the total college program time is spent in field experiences?

Elementary _____
N-9 _____
Secondary _____
Special Ed _____
Other program _____

3. What do you feel are the major forces or the reasons that determines the proportion of field experiences currently in your program?

_____

_____

_____

_____

4. When was the last time a change related to field experiences was made in your programs? What was the reason and the change?

_____

_____

_____

_____

5. What are the most positive or negative effects you feel that field experiences have in your teacher training program?

_____

_____

_____

_____

6. Have you made any attempts to prove (5)? How?

_____

_____

_____

_____

7. If not, have you any ideas on how to evaluate the effectiveness of your field experiences program?

_____

_____

_____

_____

8. Would you like to participate in developing a research study on field experiences effectiveness?

Comments _____

_____

_____

_____

9. What is your current role in field experiences education?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Name _____

University _____

Phone # _____